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U.S. CONVICTS PAKISTANI OF PROVIDING SUPPORT TO AL QAEDA

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, MARK MERSHON, the Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Office of the FBI, and RAYMOND W. KELLY, the New York City Police Commissioner, announced that UZAIR PARACHA, a Pakistani national with permanent resident alien status in the United States, was convicted Wednesday evening on charges relating to his provision of material support to the al Qaeda terrorist organization.

PARACHA was convicted on all charges in the 5-count Indictment, which included conspiracy to provide and providing material support to the al Qaeda foreign terrorist organization, conspiracy to provide and providing funds, goods, or services to al Qaeda, and identification document fraud committed to facilitate an act of international terrorism.

The evidence at trial proved that PARACHA, 25, agreed with his father, Saifullah Paracha, and two al Qaeda members, Majid Khan and Ammar Al-Baluchi, to provide support to al Qaeda by, among other things, trying to help Khan obtain a travel document that would have allowed Khan to re-enter the United States to commit a terrorist act. Statements from Khan admitted at trial revealed that, once inside the United States, Khan intended to carry out an attack on gasoline stations. In February and March 2003, PARACHA posed as Khan during telephone calls with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now

Immigration and Customs Enforcement), called Khan's bank, and attempted to gather information about Khan's immigration paperwork via the Internet. PARACHA also agreed to use Khan's credit card to make it appear that Khan was in the United States, when in fact Khan was in Pakistan.

PARACHA and his father had discussed with Khan and Al-Baluchi the possibility of the Parachas receiving up to \$200,000 from al Qaeda in connection with the assistance PARACHA was providing to Khan, which the Paracha hoped to invest in their businesses.

On March 28, 2003, agents and detectives of the New York Joint Terrorist Task Force located and interviewed PARACHA extensively regarding his connections to Khan and Al-Baluchi, and his efforts to assist them. Task Force members subsequently found in PARACHA's belongings a number of identification documents belonging to Khan, including Khan's drivers license, Khan's Social Security card, Khan's bank card, and a handwritten list of instructions from Khan directing PARACHA on how to pose as Khan when making inquiries with the INS. Also in PARACHA's possession was a key to a post office box opened in Khan's name by Aafia Siddiqui in Maryland, which PARACHA was to check to see if Khan's immigration documents had been delivered.

PARACHA is scheduled to be sentenced on March 3, 2006, before United States District Judge SIDNEY H. STEIN. He faces a maximum sentence of 75 years' imprisonment, and a maximum fine of \$1.25 million.

"Today's conviction is an important step as we seek to cut off the lifeline of support to al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, here and abroad," stated Attorney General ALBERTO R. GONZALES. "The Bush Administration will continue to use all available tools, including the criminal justice system, to deter terrorists from drawing their support from within our Nation's borders."

"The conviction of Uzair Paracha is another victory in the global fight against terrorism," stated Mr. GARCIA. "By interrupting schemes such as the one perpetrated by Paracha, we are safeguarding our country and breaking up the networks that support al Qaeda."

Mr. GARCIA praised the efforts of the Joint Terrorist Task Force, which includes agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and detectives of the New York Police Department, in conducting the investigation.

Assistant United States Attorneys KARL METZNER and ERIC
B. BRUCE are in charge of the prosecution.

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